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## Reviews

*STORIES FROM MÉRIMÉE*, with Introduction, Notes and Vocabulary by D. L. BUFFUM, Henry Holt and Co. (1920). Pp. xx+306.

The selection contains practically all of *Carmen* with the full text of five short stories: *Maleo Falcone*, *la Vision de Charles XI*, *la Dame de pique*, *Djoumâne*, and *les Sorcières espagnoles*. The introduction (13 pages) presents Mérimée's biography, and the text (157 pages) is followed by 36 pages of notes and an unusually long vocabulary (110 pages). The absence of such fixtures as illustrations, questionnaires, and exercises, suggests at the outset that the book is not primarily intended for high-school use; the reading of the text itself—some parts of *Carmen* and a good deal of *la Dame de pique*—may convince some high-school teachers that such stories are not to be discussed in their classes. Professor Buffum's selections, as a rule, are not of the easy-French variety; he edits them with considerable care; occasionally he makes a questionable statement. His latest production is no exception.

The notes are the most important part of this edition. Their author knows how badly handicapped we are through the lack of a French Grammar for Advanced American Students. "Very little attention is paid in ordinary grammars. . ." (note to page 52, line 10); "it is peculiar that so many elementary grammars. . . ." (note to p. 80, 1); "not usually pointed out in grammars," (note to p. 150, 22). And he sets out to write parts at least of the necessary grammar. Moreover, it requires a great amount of intelligent work to understand the "short, clear, polished sentences" of a stylist like Mérimée. The work is made easier by the editor's notes. The exact meaning of many words and constructions, the choice and position of the proper pronouns, "shades of meaning," especially those of certain tenses, are presented in vivid, direct, stimulating language. The grammar is treated from the historical point of view; Latin and Old French are brought in; Ayer, Nyrop, Meyer-Lübke, Hatzfeld-Darmesteter-Thomas are named in the notes. There is in addition a wealth of general information. Not only are the French government and institutions described, but we find Mérimée's Modern Greek corrected, we are taught Arabic etymologies, we hear that Maria Padilla was made the subject of a tragedy by the obscure Ancelot, we are instructed in the rules of *roulette*, and *rouge et noir*, and *faro*, we learn that there are three sizes of Cuban cigars called "regalias," of 5, 6 and 7 inches in length.

Some of these things are necessities, some are luxuries. Many teachers would welcome more of the necessities. For instance, don José Lizzarrabengoa (p. 24, 8), and Vicente, and cousin Henriquez (p. 150, 10) boast of the fact that they are of "*vieux chrétien*" stock, and this apparently means much to a Spaniard. The expression is merely translated in the vocabulary and receives no more attention on page 24. Neither does it on page 150, except that those who already know the meaning of *vieux chrétien* may find a reminder of it in the note to line 12 of the same page. The notes to p. 33, 20 and p. 141, 17 could be lifted above the level of elementary grammars if they were supplemented by the statement that the French *on*, unlike the English "one," has only the nominative case and can only be a subject. Several notes point out shades in the meaning of certain tenses. One more note of the sort might call attention to four imperfect forms (*on se moquait, était scié, je changeais, ne s'embarrassait guère*, p. 33, lines 8 to 14) which have the meaning of the conditional but are hidden among a series of genuine imperfects. A note to page 2, line 9, cautions the student that he must "distinguish between the uses of the imperfect and preterite tenses." Alas, this is not always possible with the help offered by elementary grammars; instead of the warning, we need a plain lesson. The picture of Mateo Falcone (p. 69), for instance, would lend itself to such a lesson, to an *explication* that would take one verb after the other and show Mérimée's mind at work as he uses this preterite and that imperfect. The passage, moreover, has two past indefinite forms surrounded by a number of imperfects and preterites, a rather difficult problem for those who try to solve it with an elementary grammar. The end of José's confession offers the same mixture of preterite and past indefinite (p. 67).

Mateo's portrait could also be made the subject of an *analyse littéraire*; so could the picture of the *demoiselle de compagnie* (p. 103), or the temptation of Fortunato (p. 77) and many other passages. There is no attempt of the sort in the notes. Literary notes are few, indeed, for an edition intended to be used "in literary as well as in linguistic classes." A note might ask the question: Why is don Pedro, a king who died in 1369, mentioned twice (p. 37 and p. 65) in a modern story, *Carmen*, dated 1830? Mérimée evidently had don Pedro and Maria Padilla on his mind when he wrote *Carmen* (see page 37). He champions the king; for him don Pedro is not *le Cruel*, but *le Justicier* (p. 36, 25).<sup>1</sup> He also has a word to say for Maria Padilla (*on a accusé Maria Padilla*, p. 65). The fact is that he was to publish his *Histoire de don Pèdre I<sup>er</sup>* in 1848, three years after *Carmen*. Did the master's grip on his subject weaken? Did the historian in Mérimée get the better of Méri-

<sup>1</sup> Note by the Editor: The explanation is suggested in Professor Buffum's Introduction, pp. xvi-xvii.

mée, the novelist? Should he not say with don José (p. 58, 27): "Tous ces détails voûs ennuiant sans doute"? A few words and dates added to the note on Maria Padilla (p. 259) could easily answer these questions. For in 1845, before Mérimée had published his own *Histoire de don Pèdre*, the figures of don Pedro and his mistress were not as unknown to his readers as they are to our American students today. They had been the object of considerable interest for some time when they appeared in *Carmen*. It might also be stated that even today the historic don Pedro receives some attention in the French *Cours d'histoire*.

Corneille's well known line quoted by Mérimée on page 15:

*Cette obscure clarté qui tombe des étoiles*

is ignored in the notes. The quotation "*sa langue se délia*" may be taken, as a note says, from the king's own account of the Vision (p. 91, 27), but if that is the case, the king himself quotes Luke, I, 64: "his tongue loosed." In a story written shortly before his death, Mérimée quotes a line which is not so familiar (p. 142, 26); if traced to its author, it might shed some light on Mérimée's literary favorites. Finally, why should we, in studying Mérimée, adopt the following order of dates: 1845, 1829, 1829, 1849, 1873, 1830?

These are sins of omission. The notes, and vocabulary as well, show some sins of commission. A note to *mon officier* (p. 28, 24) states that "the possessive is used in addressing a superior officer; for an inferior it is omitted." Yes, a colonel speaking to a lieutenant says "*lieutenant*," while the latter addresses the colonel as "*mon colonel*." But José is not even a *sous-officier*. Carmen begs him to let her escape, she appeals to his pride by calling him *mon officier*; by contrast she calls his two men *ces deux conscrits* (p. 30, 25). This the vocabulary translates by "conscript"; the real meaning, however, is "raw recruits," plain "rookies." When José is reduced to the status of a second class private, she meets him again, and again she calls him *mon officier*, but her voice has a different intonation: *Mon officier, tu montes la garde comme un conscrit!* (p. 34, 21). The sarcastic meaning of *conscrit*, in sharp contrast with *mon officier*, is evident.—The longest note (46 lines to p. 4, 18) deals with the use of *ce* and *il* as impersonal subjects. It is not the best note. It repeats the statement often made in ordinary grammars that we must say *c'est* "before a superlative." That theory truly has nine lives. A Frenchman says *Celle que je veux dire c'est la plus grande*, as he says *Celle que je veux dire, c'est la blonde*, and his reason for using *c'est* is the same in both cases. The note insists twice that we must say *c'est dommage* and *c'est pitié*; it calls these expressions "exceptions" and "fixed phrases." Yet Mérimée himself uses *il serait dommage*. Then again, are *c'est dommage* and *c'est pitié* truly exceptions to the rule that "when the predicate is indeterminate, *il* is used"? Is there

such a rule? Mérimée, to be sure, does say like everybody *s'il en était besoin* (p. 79, 7) and it should not be difficult to prove that he also says *il est question*; but are there many *il est* of that sort? On the contrary, the old language has a great many phrases like *c'est peine perdue, c'est chose certaine, c'est merveille, c'est miracle, c'est pure folie, c'est justice, est-ce jalousie? est-ce contentement? ce sont là plaisirs de roi, C'est chose incertaine* (Buffum's Michelet, p. 151, 28.), *C'était bien raison qu'il fût à l'honneur* (*Ibid.* p. 129, 12.) *C'était plaisir d'entendre sur la hauteur le bruit des fouets* (Daudet, in Buffum's French Short Stories, p. 116 19.). Of course, we do say *il es'* before an indeterminate predicate in *il est médecin*, and the note opposes *c'est un médecin* and *il est médecin*; but is the latter *il* impersonal? The note as a whole is a maze of rules and exceptions; it fails to throw much light on the subject, because it does not bring out the three or four fundamental notions that underlie the whole question.

One feature of Professor Buffum's newer vocabularies is that they indicate the pronunciation of certain words. Many who have been puzzled by his pronunciation of *respect* will turn to this word in the new vocabulary. According to his *Contes Français*, published in 1915, the word was then "usually pronounced *respek*." Two years later, in "Short Stories from Balzac," it had become "*rèspèk* or *rèspè*." "Stories from Mérimée" now gives "*respè*."<sup>2</sup> The statement that *sage*, meaning "wise," is old is surprising.<sup>3</sup> There are at least two old words, however, in *la Dame de Pique*. *Fiacre* (p. 110, 27) has its old meaning of "cabman," and *plancher*, (p. 95, 24) means the "ceiling," as it did in Molière's time: *qu'on me le pendre au plancher* (*l'Avare*, V, 2.) On the other hand, *chapelle* (p. 22, 21 and p. 64, 29) becomes part of a technical expression in *en chapelle*, which is something like the "death watch," as they call it in Sing Sing. The *métier* that plays a certain part in *la Dame de pique* (p. 98, 21, p. 103, 30, p. 108, 26), is not a "loom" but a "frame," the meaning is plain on page 100, lines 21 and 26. *Il n'y a pas d'apparence de* might be better translated by: "it bears no resemblance to wisdom to . . ." (p. 96, 3). The translation given for *remettre* (p. 285, first line of second column) and meant for page 107, line 6, forgets the initial *re*; neither does it take into account line 5 on page 107. As to *Roumi*, which occurs on page 143, line 18, no one can tell today whether "Mérimée in using this name was thinking of the Gipsy *rom* and *romi*," but we do know that *Roumi* is a term applied by the Arabs to Christians in general, and *Djoumâne* is an Algerian story.

<sup>2</sup> Note by the Editor: In the first named volumes Professor Buffum accepted the authority of the *Dictionnaire général*. This work characterizes "*rèspè*" as "*vieilli*."

<sup>3</sup> Note by the Editor: This meaning is so characterized in the *Petit Larousse illustré*.

The book, finally, has a fair sprinkling of misprints and slips. The vocabulary prints *adjutant* for *adjutant*, and the introduction (p. xvi) speaks of "the death of Mateo Falcone," but pages 92-104 seem to have received more than their share of oversights. Page 92 starts with *La* for *Le*; p. 95, 2 and p. 98, 11 have *Fedotovna* for *Fedorovna*, and p. 96, 13 *Cassanova*; p. 98, 21 gives *campagnie* instead of *compagnie*; on page 100, line 31 should end with an interrogation mark; *vint*, on page 104, 25 wants a circumflex. *Quelque* before a numeral adjective is spelled with a final *s* in *quelques deux lieues* (p. 1, 4) and *quelques deux cents pas* (p. 83, 8); it is invariable in *quelque soixante ans*, which occurs twice (p. 95, 11 and p. 120, 3.)<sup>4</sup> Failure to notice a misprint or to comment on variations in usage may lead students to serious mistakes; it has even led the authors of some widely used textbooks to make strange assertions.

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GÉOGRAPHIE HUMAINE DE LA FRANCE. BY JEAN BRUNHES. Being Vol. I of *Histoire de la Nation Française*, edited by Gabriel Hanotaux. Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1920. Pp. lxxx+495.

French histories of one sort or another, written by several scholars, each working on the period or subject which is his special field, and published under the general supervision of an eminent authority, are no novelty. Examples which come readily to mind are Lavissee's "Histoire de France" and Petit de Julleville's "Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française." Some months ago there appeared the prospectus of a new work of this kind under the editorship of Gabriel Hanotaux, a member of the Académie Française, and recently the first volume came from the press. In the introduction to this first volume the editor outlines the plan of the work. He calls it "Histoire de la nation française" because, instead of giving only political history or literary history and treating as secondary the great developments in thought, technical arts, science, and manners, the collaborators propose in the fifteen volumes to sound the depths of French civilization, to present not only the geography of France and the political and literary histories of the French people, but also the story of their artistic, military, and economic growth and their religious and scientific thought in an *ensemble* which will show how these have interacted to produce that great resultant, modern France.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Note by the Editor: Both forms of the word are found before a numeral. Cf. Littré *s. v. quelque*.

<sup>1</sup> The proposed volumes are: Géographie humaine de la France, 2 vols.; Histoire politique du peuple français, 3 vols.; Histoire de la littérature française, 2 vols.; Histoire de l'art français, 1 vol.; Histoire militaire, 2 vols.; Histoire économique et sociale, 1 vol.; Histoire diplomatique, 1 vol.; Histoire religieuse 1 vol.; Histoire des sciences et de la philosophie scientifique, 2 vols.